Ikiboram X

STORY
JEFF_GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL
COLOR
CATHY LESSL

CHAPTER I
ARRIVAL (HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER)

THIS IS TRULY HOW THINGS HAPPENED.

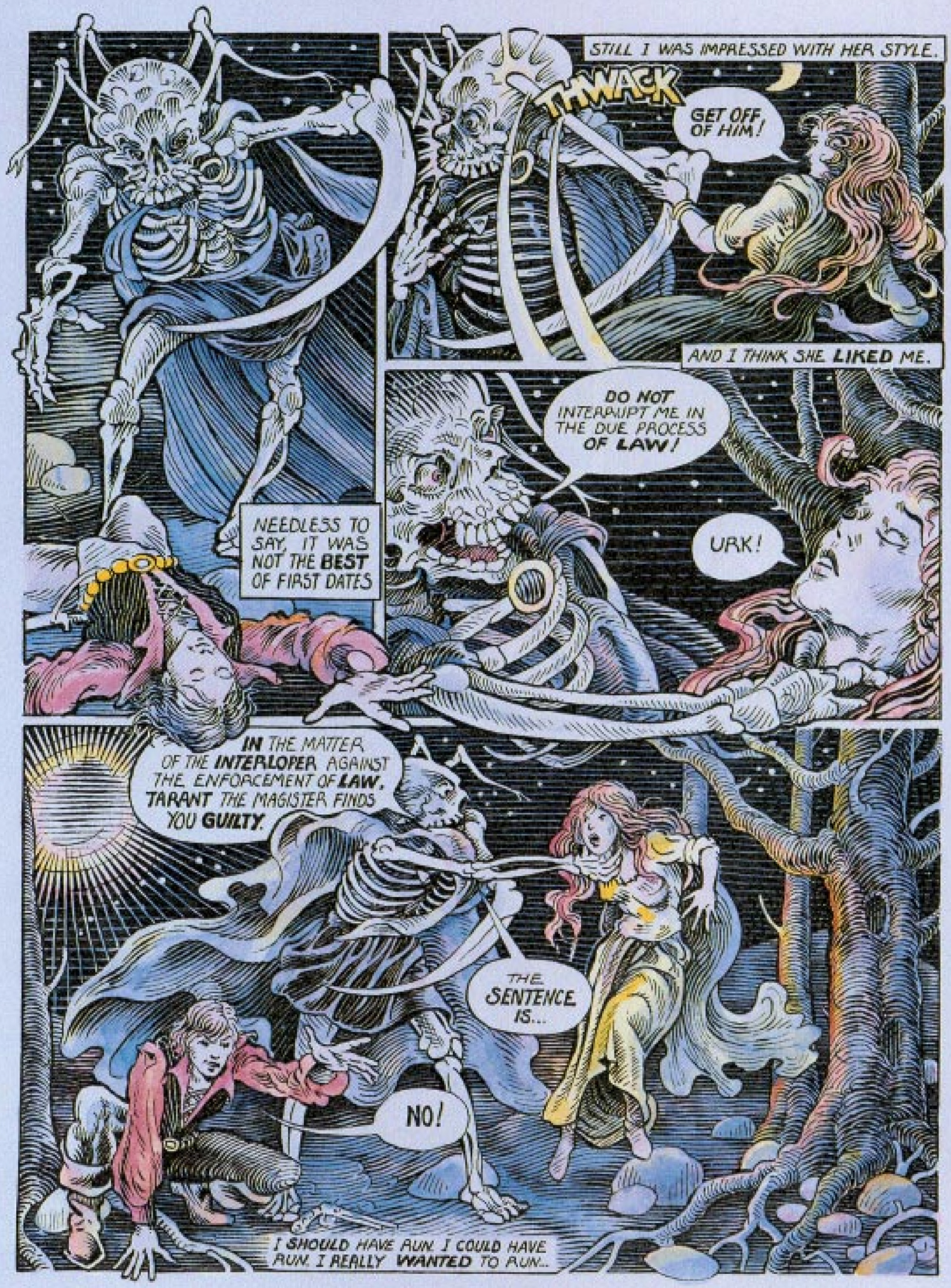
HER NAME WAS JENNIFER BUT EVERYONE CALLED HER JEN. SHE WAS A NATIVE OF A PLACE CALLED WESTERLAND, A NATION OF FARMERS AND WOODSMEN HUGGING THE SHORES OF THE STARBRIGHT SEA.

I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, BUT HER BIGGEST WORRY OF THE MOMENT WAS WHICH OF TWO SUITORS TO GO TO THE HARVEST DANCE WITH.

SHHHORRRR

WHAT SHE DIDN'T KNOW WAS THAT SHE WOULDN'T GET THE **CHANCE** TO DECIDE.

BECAUSE THATS WHEN I CAME INTO HER LIFE.


STILL I WAS IMPRESSED WITH HER STYLE.
THWACK
GET OFF OF HIM!
AND I THINK SHE LIKED ME.
DO NOT INTERRUPT ME IN THE DUE PROCESS OF LAW!
URK!
NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT WAS NOT THE BEST OF FIRST DATES
IN THE MATTER OF THE INTERLOPER AGAINST THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAW, TARANT THE MAGISTER FINDS YOU GUILTY.
THE SENTENCE IS...
NO!
I SHOULD HAVE RUN. I COULD HAVE RUN. I REALLY WANTED TO RUN...

I'M THE ONE YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO **RULE** AGAINST. YOU NEED TO CLEAR **MY** CASE FROM THE DOCKET **FIRST**

VERY WELL, **UNTIL** JUDGEMENT IS RENDERED **AGAINST YOU...**

BUT I ALWAYS **WAS** A SUCKER FOR A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

HER CASE IS **HELD** OVER

NOOO!

NOW IN THE MATTER OF ACE BLOODRUNNER, **RENEGADE...**

THE SENTENCE IS **DEATH.**

YEAH

I HAD **DEFINITELY** HAD BETTER FIRST DATES

TO BE CONTINUED...

CHAPTER II

INTO THE MAZEWORKS

(THE FIRST DATES ALWAYS THE TOUGHEST)

Xiboram

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL
COLOR
CATHY LESSL

I'D MET JEN JUST **MOMENTS** BEFORE SHE WAS THROWN THROUGH A DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY BY A MAGISTER NAMED **TARANT**

HE'S NINE AND A HALF FEET OF **UNDEADLY UNPLEASANTNESS** WITH MY **NAME** ON IT.

YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND **GUILTY** OF CRIMES AGAINST **LAW**, AND ARE HEREBY **SENTENCED**...

TO **DEATH!**

SHOKK

AT TIMES LIKE THESE THERE'S ONLY **ONE** WAY TO FACE THESE PROBLEMS:

AND THAT'S **HEAD ON!**

MY KEY!

TARANT'S CONCERN WAS JUSTIFIED!

BECAUSE WITHOUT A KEY HE CAN'T RE-OPEN A GATE ONCE I CLOSE IT.

I COMMAND YOU TO...

NOT THAT THERE WAS ANY CHANCE THAT HE WOULD GET THROUGH THE GATE BEFORE I CLOSED IT.

STTTOOOOP!!

SNAP

PANT

PANT

AIGHT. PIECE OF CAKE.

I WISH I COULD SAY THAT WAS THE LAST OF HIM WE'D BE SEEING

OF COURSE, I KNEW I HAD FORGOTTEN SOMETHING!

HEEEELP!

MYTES!

A PENNY SAVED IS A PENNY EARNED

WASTE NOT WANT NOT

HAVE A NICE DAY

THEY FOLLOW BIGWIGS LIKE TARANT, TAKING **ANYTHING** THAT ISN'T NAILED DOWN!

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

MAY I TAKE YOUR HAT AND COAT

JEEPERS CREEPERS

JUST DO IT

GET

OFF

OF

ME!

LAW IS ORDER AN GOOD LAW IS GOOD ORDER

FOOLS RUSH IN WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

DOES SHE DOESN'T OR SHE?

YOU FOUGHT THE LAW AND THE LAW WON

YOUR FACE'll FREEZE LIKE THAT

WHERE YOU GET THOSE SHOES

HELP!

GET THEM OFF!

AND IF THEY CAN **PRY** IT UP, THEN IT **ISN'T** NAILED DOWN

IF I WADED IN THEY WOULD TRY TO LOOT **MY** BODY AS WELL

THERE ARE TIMES FOR **ACTION** AND TIMES FOR **GUILE**

THIS IS A TIME FOR **GUILE**

TO BE CONTINUED

Kilorain X

EPISODE THREE: THE FINE ART OF NEGOTIATION

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL

COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: JEN AND I HAD ESCAPED TARANT'S ATTACK BY FLEEING HER WORLD, BACK THROUGH THE GATE. HOWEVER, JEN IMMEDIATELY RAN AFOUL OF A PACK OF **MYTES**, NASTY LITTLE SCAVENGERS WHO TAKE ANYTHING THAT IS NOT NAILED DOWN. I **HAD** TO WIN HER FREE OF THEIR CLUTCHES, SO...

POM!

NOW THAT I HAVE YOUR **ATTENTION.**

I **STRONGLY** RECOMMEND YOU **LET** THE YOUNG LADY GO.

HAHAHAH!

WE GET YOU NEXT!

BWAHAHAH!

YOU AND WHAT ARMY?

HA HA

YOU DIRTY RAT!

THINKS HE'S THE BIG HERO!

TOO MANY MYTES NOT ENOUGH BULLETS.

NEEDS OF THE MANY OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE FEW

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN BADGES!

I'D HATE TO SEE YOU MEET THE **SAME** FATE...

...AS YOUR MASTER, TARANT

CLANK

HMMMM

OPSIE

HMMM

HMMMM

HMM

RUN AWAY!

AND YOUR LITTLE DOG TOO!

HE WHO FIGHTS AND RUNS AWAY

LIVES TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY.

I THINK I HEAR MY MOTHER CALLING

MOTHER SAID THERE'D BE DAYS LIKE THIS

DISPERSION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

SHE LOOKED BADLY SHAKEN UP BY THE MYTES, BUT UNHARMED. I RUSHED TO HER SIDE AT ONCE.
MILADY!
THEN SHE LOOKED IN MY EYES AND SAID THOSE THREE WORDS EVERY MAN LONGS TO HEAR A WOMAN SAY.
WHERE
AM
I?
AND HERE I WAS AFRAID SHE'D PANIC
HOMMMMMMM
YOU ARE IN A GREAT DEAL OF DANGER, MILADY...
AND THOUGH THE LEGEND OF ACE BLOODRUNNER IS HAILED AS THROUGH-OUT THE MAZEWORKS FOR HIS BRAVERY, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND WE CLEAR THIS AREA IMMEDIATELY.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMETHING WORSE COMES...
...ALONG

AN ORB!

GET DOWN, MILADY!

HEY!

HOWWWWW

I HAD ONLY **ONE** SHOT...

AND I HAD **ALREADY USED** IT ON THE MYTES

I FELT LIKE AN **IDIOT** OF COURSE.

MAKE THAT A **DEAD** IDIOT

ACE?

ACE?!?

TO BE CONTINUED...

Libram X

EPISODE FOUR: AN EYE FOR AN EYE

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL
COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR:

THEY ARE CALLED **ORBS**. THEIR GAZE CRYSTALLIZES OPPONENTS FOR A LATER RECOVERY AND **TORTURE** BY THEIR MASTERS. SOMETIMES YEARS LATER. AND YOU'RE CONSCIOUS ALL THE WAY THROUGH IT. I WAS **NOT HAPPY** WITH THE PROSPECT. I WAS **NOT** IN A POSITION TO **ARGUE AT THAT MOMENT**, HOWEVER...

IF JEN HAD KNOWN HOW **DANGEROUS** THESE CREATURES WERE, SHE WOULD HAVE LEFT ME TO MY FATE. I WOULD NOT HAVE BLAMED HER.

NO!

A FRONTAL ATTACK IS USUALLY **SUICIDE** AGAINST AN ORB...

LUCKY FOR ME, JEN DIDN'T KNOW THIS.

OF COURSE, IT WAS THE LAST THING THE **ORB** EXPECTED AS WELL.

WITH THE ORB'S **DESTRUCTION**, ITS BANEFUL EFFECT WORE OFF QUICKLY,

GASP! GASP!

BY ALL THE SAINTS...

JUST **LOOK** AT THIS **MESS!**

NICE TO KNOW SHE STILL HAD HER **PRIORITIES** STRAIGHT.

FOOMP

I HAD TO LEAD HER TO SAFETY.

WHAT **WAS** THAT?

HEY!

FOLLOW...

ME...

FOLLOW YOU? NOW **WAIT** A SECOND, HERE...

WHERE ARE WE? WHAT ARE THOSE CREATURES? WHY DO...

ACE?

WHERE DID YOU...

GOMMMMPH?!?

SHHH!

BE QUIET. IF THERE WAS AN ORB IN THIS PART OF THE MAZEWORKS, THEN THERE MIGHT BE...

...THERE!

HELLBANE ARTILLERY— THE ORBS WORK FOR THEM AS SPOTTERS. IF THEY'RE HERE I MUST BE INTO SOMETHING REALLY BIG.

LOOK, MA ACE BLOODRIVER, (NOT THAT THIS HASN'T BEEN EXCITING.

BUT WHAT ARE THESE MONSTERS?

WHAT IS THIS... MAZEWORLD?

ISN'T THERE SOME TYPE OF LAW AGAINST THESE MONSTERS?

IT'S BLOODRUNNER MILADY.

AND AS FOR THE LAW AROUND HERE... AND MAZEWORKS

I'M AFRAID THOSE MONSTERS ARE IT.

TO BE CONTINUED:

NEXT TIME, WE GET SOME EXPLANATIONS (WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME).

Elfquest

CHAPTER 5

THE NATURE OF THE MAZEWORKS

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL
COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR:
JEN AND I HAD EVADED A NUMBER OF PERILS, AND CHOSE TO DECAMP TO QUIETER WATERS. SHE WANTED TO CONTACT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WHICH IN TURN LED TO FURTHER QUESTIONS AND REVELATIONS.

YOU MEAN THESE... THESE... AWFUL **THINGS** ARE IN CHARGE OF THIS PLACE?

"IN CHARGE" IS A REALLY NEBULOUS TERM - LET'S JUST SAY THEY'RE THE **BIGGEST** PACK OF BULLIES THAT WANT TO CONTROL THE MAZEWORKS.

THE COAST IS CLEAR, **LET'S** GO.

THEY HAVE A BIG ORGANIZATION, A BIG BUDGET, AND A BIG SET OF **RULES**. THEREFORE THEY'RE WHAT PASS FOR THE LAW AND THE AUTHORITIES IN **THESE** PARTS.

IF **THEY'RE** THE LAW AND **YOU'RE** FIGHTING THEM DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU A...

A CHAOTIC ELEMENTAL? A WILD CARD? A DANGER TO THEIR MACHINATIONS?

I WAS GOING TO SAY "**A CRIMINAL.**"

I FAVOR THE TITLE "**LIKABLE ROGUE**," MYSELF.

AND WHAT **ARE** "THESE PARTS"? THIS PLACE IS BIGGER THAN ANY CASTLE I'VE EVER SEEN.

WHAT? WHAT **IS** IT?

ER, NOTHING. I THINK.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? RE**EEEK!**

THEN **THIS** IS THE REAL WORLD?

WELL, TO PUT IT SIMPLY, THIS **IS** REALITY.

KIND OF. I MEAN, SORT OF.

I MEAN, YOUR WORLD IS REAL AFTER ALL. YOU'RE REAL, AND I'M REAL. THE MAZE-WORKS ARE JUST THE PART OF REAL THAT HOOKS TOGETHER ALL THE OTHER PARTS OF THE REAL.

THINK OF THE UNIVERSE AS A BIG MANSION. WHAT YOU'VE THOUGHT OF AS THE REAL WORLD, UP TO NOW, WAS JUST ONE ROOM OF THAT MANSION. THE DOOR TO THE REST WAS JUST LOCKED...

...ACTUALLY, YOU DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THAT THERE WAS A DOOR AT ALL.

BECAUSE THE ROOM WAS SO BIG, RIGHT?

THAT MEANS THAT TO GET BACK TO MY REAL WORLD, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS OPEN THE RIGHT...

DOOOOOR!

THAT'S **PART** OF THE PROBLEM- THE DOORS DON'T ALWAYS OPEN TO THE **SAME** LOCATIONS ALL THE TIME- AND NOT ALL THE LOCATIONS ARE **SAFE** FOR THE TRAVELER. **ALL** TYPES OF REALITY ARE POSSIBLE.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THESE DOORS.

I STUMBLED ON ONE LEADING TO **YOUR** WORLD BY **ACCIDENT**. I WAS TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM TARANI.

SO, YOU'RE **SAYING** THERE'S NO WAY HOME?

NO, ONLY THAT THE **DOOR** WE USED **ONCE** TO GET HERE, WON'T OPEN BACK INTO **YOUR** REALITY NOW, BUT INTO **ANOTHER** REALITY.

WE HAVE TO **FIND A DIFFERENT** DOOR BACK.

HOW DO WE **FIND** THAT DOOR?

WE GO VISIT A **FRIEND** OF MINE WHO HAS.... **CONNECTIONS**.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Libram X

CHAPTER 6

CHARLIE THE CYBER-GHOUL

STORY JEFF GRUBB

ART BOB LESSL

COLOR CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: RETURNING JEN TO HER HOMEWORLD HAS DETOURED ME FROM MY PRIMARY GOAL, BUT I CANNOT ABANDON HER. SO I TAKE HER TO MEET MY FAVORITE COMPUTER ZOMBIE, WHO IS USUALLY A FONT OF INFORMATION.

SO, THERE ARE A WHOLE **BUNCH** OF REALITIES,

AND WE'RE SORT OF IN A COSMIC **HALLWAY** BETWEEN THEM?

THAT'S **ONE** WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.

OF COURSE, **NATIVES** OF THE **MAZEWORKS** THINK OF **THEMSELVES** AS THE CENTRAL REALITY AND **YOU** AS BEING FROM SOME CULTURAL **BACKWATER.**

SO WHO'S IN CHARGE?

WELL, THAT'S **PART** OF THE PROBLEM.

THERE'S ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT SAYS **NOBODY** IS IN CHARGE, AND NEVER WAS.

ANOTHER GROUP SAYS THAT THERE ARE **SECRET MASTERS** OF THE MAZEWORKS RUNNING EVERYTHING.

AND THERE'S A **THIRD** BUNCH THAT SAYS THERE WAS ORIGINALLY SOME SORT OF BIG **COSMIC ARCHITECT** WHO SET EVERYTHING UP, THEN **LEFT.**

AND THIS COSMIC ARCHITECT **LEFT** WITHOUT LEAVING ANY WORD **BEHIND?**

SOME FOLK BELIEVE THAT HE LEFT AN **INSTRUCTION BOOK** THAT CONTROLLED EVERYTHING. SOME SAY THESE SECRET MASTERS WROTE THE BOOK, INSTEAD. WHATEVER, THE BOOK DOESN'T HAVE AN **OFFICIAL** NAME, SO EVERYONE CALLS IT **LIBRAM X.**

AND THESE LAW-BULLIES, LIKE TARANT, HAVE THE BOOK?

NO. THEY WANT IT, THOUGH.

PLEASE STAND BACK FROM THE EDGE OF THE PLATFORM.

THE MAGAITTE EXPRESS DOES NOT STOP AT THIS STATION.

THEY FIGURE THAT IF A SET OF RULES EXISTED ON RUNNING THE MAZEWORKS,

AND THEY HAD IT, THEY WOULD BECOME THE DE FACTO SECRET MASTERS.

AND WHY DO YOU WANT IT?

TO KEEP IT OUT OF THEIR HANDS OF COURSE!

HERE'S MY CONTACT. CHARLIE, YOU THERE?

I AM ALWAYS HERE, BLOODRUNNER... BRING JEN INSIDE WITH YOU.

HOW'S MY FAVORITE KEYBOARD COWBOY?

DEAD, AND BORED, AS ALWAYS.

KNOW WHAT I NEED?

YOU NEED A LEAD ON A PORTAL TO JEN'S HOMELAND, AND ANY NEWS ON THE LIBRAM. I'VE ALSO ARRANGED AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE YOUNG LADY WITH THE TAILOR...

I'M SORRY, WE'VE MET?

ONLY JUST NOW. I HAVE A FORM OF PRECOGNITION. IN ANY EVENT, POIROT IS WAITING FOR YOU DOWNSTAIRS IN THE FITTING ROOM. YOU GO ON AHEAD.

NOW, BLOODRUNNER, WHAT DID YOU WANT LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE?

JUST THE LATEST DOPE OFF THE NETS FOR THE LIBRAM, CHARLIE. AND IT LED ME DIRECTLY INTO TARANT AND HIS MYTES. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.

I HOPE I TOLD YOU TO BE CAREFUL AND READY TO TRUST A RANDOM DOOR?

UH-HUH. WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT JEN TO YOU. BUT YOU SEEMED TO BE EXPECTING HER ALREADY, AS USUAL. HOW DO I WORK IT?

HELLO? ANYONE HOME?

WELCOME, Y'ALL, TO MY LITTLE SHOP! GRACIOUS, CHILD! YOU LOOK AS BAD AS A RODEO STADIUM AFTER A FIVE-HOUR BULL-ROPING MARATHON.

WELL, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THAT!

SALE

TO BE CONTINUED

Library X

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL

COLOR
CATHY LESSL

CHAPTER 7 THE FITTING

THE STORY SO FAR: JEN AND I HAVE SOUGHT OUT MY MAIN CONTACT IN THE MAZEWORKS. CHARLIE IS A WONDERFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU STOP TO CONSIDER THAT HE'S DEAD. I'M STAYING IN HIS OFFICE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO RETURN JEN TO HER NATIVE WORLD, WHILE SHE VISITS CHARLIE'S TAILOR. I'VE TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO HER WHAT THE MAZEWORKS IS, BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH HAS STUCK.

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, I'M PRETTY PROUD OF HER FOR NOT RUNNING SCREAMING INTO THE NIGHT.

I'M SORRY, I'M LOOKING FOR THE...TAILOR?

THEN YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE! RUSSEL T. POIROT AT YER SERVICE, LIL' LADY. FINERY, CLOTHING, JEWELRY, WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, ALL UNDER ONE ROOF! COMPLETE SHOPPING FOR THE WELL-DRESSED ADVENTURER.

WEAPONS OF..?

HANG ON, HANG ON, LET ME FINISH.

YEP, YEP. 24 CROTONS ACROSS THE BEAM. OK.

YOU WERE SAYING?

NOTHING. YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I KNOW.

A PRIEST. A MINISTER, REALLY. FROM MY... MY HOMEWORLD, I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT.

NOT SURPRISED, NOT SURPRISED AT ALL. THAT'S THE WAY THE MAZEWORKS WORKS.

BEG PARDON?

THE WAY I FIGURE IT, WE'RE AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE, THE CENTRAL REALITY. EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST A SHADOW, AN ILLUSION, A WRAITH OF THAT REALITY. FOLLOW ME SO FAR?

WELL...

NOW IT FIGURES THAT IF I'M STANDING CLOSEST TO THE CENTER, I'LL HAVE A BUNCH OF SHADOWS, ALL IN THE LESSER WORLDS LIKE YOURS. YOUR MINISTER IS ONE OF THOSE WRAITHS. I'VE HEARD A BUNCH OF 'EM - PRIESTS, CRIMINALS, POLITICIANS, MERCANTILE ALIENS...

OF COURSE, NONE OF THEM HAVE MY NATURAL CHARM AND ABILITY.

YEP, ALL THE MEASUREMENTS JIBE WITH WHAT CHARLIE SAID. I HAVE SOME OUTFITS ALREADY PREPARED.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN "WHAT CHARLIE..?"

JUST GET CHANGED. I WAS TOLD THIS WAS A RUSH ORDER, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU'D LIKE.

"...SO I MADE UP ONE OF EVERYTHING."

HMMMM

TOO HEAVY.

TOO FLIMSY.

TOO BULKY!

TOO... TIGHT.

WAY TOO IMPRACTICAL

LET'S JUST FORGET ABOUT THIS ONE.

NOT BAD...

NOT BAD AT ALL, MR. POIROT.

BUT IF YOU ALREADY **KNEW** MY MEASUAEMENTS, WHY..?

I HAD TO TAKE THEM **NOW** TO GIVE TO CHARLIE. SO HE COULD GIVE THEM TO **ME** SO **I** COULD GET THINGS READY.

OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE **KNOWN** YOU WERE COMING.

I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

CHARLIE'S LIVING TIME BACKWARDS. SO, IF **I** DON'T TELL **HIM**, THEN **HE** CAN'T TELL **ME** EARLIER FOR **ME**, LATER FOR **HIM**. FOLLOW?

BUT YOU ALREADY **HAD** THE INFORMATION.

I ONLY HAD THE **INFORMATION** BECAUSE I LATER GAVE IT TO HIM, OR EARLIER FROM HIS VIEWPOINT. LOOK, IT'S SIMPLE...

A-HEM

SORRY TO INTERUPT THE PHILOSOPHICAL **DEBATE**.

CHARLIE'S GOT A LINE ON A GATE TO YOUR HOME, BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET MOVING.

OH, AND, UH, NICE OUTFIT, BY THE WAY, JEN.

GOES WITH YOUR EYES.

NEXT: BATTLE AT THE GATE.

Tribram X

CHAPTER 8
THE SECRET PATH

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL
COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR:

FINALLY RID OF HER TATTERS, JEN LOOKED EVERY INCH A WARRIOR OF CHAOS. WITH HER NEW DUDS SEEMED TO COME A NEW ATTITUDE AS WELL. **NOW** WE CAME TO THE MATTER AT HAND, GETTING HER HOME.

WHICH PROVED **NOT** TO BE AS **EASY** AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.

JEN, ACCORDING TO CHARLIE, THERE'S A **GATE** TO YOUR **HOME** IN THE SHELTERING DRAGON REGION.

HE SAYS RUSS HERE KNOWS A SECRET PATH.

HOME? **MY** HOME?

AYUP. IT STARTS RIGHT HERE, BUCKAROO.

YOU BETTER BRING SOME LIGHT, THOUGH — ITS A **TAD** MURKY.

OF COURSE **YOUR** HOME. THAT'S THE **WHOLE** POINT — **GETTING** YOU BACK.

YES, OF COURSE.

IT **WAS NICE** MEETING YOU, MR. POIROT.

MAH PLEASURE, LITTLE LADY.

WILL THIS BE FAR?

NOT FAR.

MR. POIROT WAS SAYING THAT **THIS** IS REALITY. THE REAL REALITY.

AND THERE ARE VERSIONS OF ALL OF US IN THIS REALITY.

THAT'S ONE THEORY.

DOESN'T THAT MEAN THERE'S SOMEONE IN THIS WORLD WHO'S THE "REAL" ME?

I MEAN, HAVE YOU SEEN OR MET THIS OTHER ME?

ACE? DID YOU HEAR ME?

ACE? DID I SAY SOME THING..?

...WRONG? NO, NOT WRONG AT ALL.

I GUESS I JUST WANT TO SAY I'M...SORRY. SORRY FOR ALL THIS.

ALL THE RUNNING AROUND, THE MONSTERS, THE CONTINUAL BATTLES. YOU MUST THINK MY WORLD IS VERY WEIRD.

NOT WEIRD. NOT PLEASANT, THOUGH. MAYBE A WEIRD TYPE OF PLEASANT.

YOU'RE TOO KIND. BUT I CAN BET THIS **ISN'T** THE LIFE YOU'RE USED TO.

THE LIFE I'M **USED TO** IS SAFE, PEDESTRIAN, AND, WELL, BORING.

BORING. I COULD STAND A LITTLE BOREDOM AS WELL.

SO, DO YOU IMPRESS ALL YOUR GIRL-FRIENDS THIS WAY?

I DON'T... THAT IS. I'M NOT...

NO YOUNG LADY IN YOUR LIFE?

WELL, I'VE BEEN KIND OF BUSY...

...RUNNING ABOUT MONSTERS. CONSTANT BATTLES. I HEARD.

LOOK, YOU HAD A QUESTION ABOUT IF THERE WAS ANOTHER **YOU** AROUND HERE.

YES?

I JUST WANT **YOU** TO **KNOW** THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN HER, AND EVEN IF I DID...

YES?

I THINK I LIKE **YOUR** YOU A **LOT** BETTER.

OH, THAT'S SOOO SWEET.

EEEP!

OTTO! YOU SCARED US OUT OF FIVE LIVES.

IT'S ALL RIGHT ACE. I SHOULD BE USED TO IT BY NOW.

YOU'RE GETTING TOO TENSE, KID.

COFFEE NERVES?

CHARLIE SAID YOU WERE PASSING THROUGH, HEADING FOR A PORTAL IN THE SHELTERING DRAGON REGION...

SO I THOUGHT I'D WARN YAH.

WARN US? WARN US OF WHAT? IS THERE A PROBLEM?

YOU MIGHT CAIL IT A PROBLEM...

I'D JUST CALL IT A WAR.

NEXT: WAR ZONE

Kibram X

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL

COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: MY ATTEMPTS TO SEND JEN HOME HAVE COME CLOSE TO FRUITION- WE'VE FOUND THE DOOR THAT LEADS TO HER HOME PLANE. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS A SMALL ARMY BETWEEN US AND IT.

Chapter 9 WAR ZONE

OH!

SHEESH! WHAT A MESS!

WHADDAYA THINK? FIND ANOTHER WAY?

GASP!

NO, THIS IS OUR BEST BET AND THE LAWBOYS PROBABLY KNOW IT AS WELL.

HOW'YA FIGURE?

WE HAVE SEERS, THEY HAVE SEERS.

THAT WOMAN...

WE'RE JUST LUCKY THEY HAVEN'T TAKEN THE GATEWAY.

SHE'S ME!

SHE'S ME!

WHAT THE?

JEN!

OF ALL THE DAMNFOOL, IMPULSIVE, CRAZY THINGS TO...

YEAH, IT REMINDS ME OF **YOU.**

SHE'S GOING TO GET HERSELF **KILLED!**

GEE, YOU REALLY **DO** CARE ABOUT HER, DON'T YOU?

MORE THAN YOU **KNOW.** WE'VE GOT TO **DO** SOMETHING!

ONLY **ONE** THING TO **DO,** THEN...

HEY! PUT ME...

DOOOOOOWN!

NICE OF YOU TO DROP IN.

WE HAVE TO TALK.

OH, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU NEVER DID ANYTHING RASH.

THAT'S DIFFERENT.

LOOK, AT LEAST WE'RE WINNING!

CORRECT THAT.

WE'VE WON! YES! WE'VE WON!!

READY... AIM!

...OR MAYBE NOT...

NEXT: THINGS GO BOOM.

Inferno

STORY JEFF GRUBB

ART BOB LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: JEN AND I THOUGHT WE HAD DRIVEN OFF THE FORCES OF LAW FROM THE GATEWAY TO JEN'S HOME, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE RETREATING MYTES WERE JUST CLEARING A PATH FOR THE HELLCANNON.

AIM!

READY!

OTTO!

FIRE!

UH-UH-UH! DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!

BADOOM!

OTTO...

OH, THAT'S VERY NICE.

...THAT WAS POSSIBLY THE STUPIDEST THING YOU HAVE EVER DONE.

COMING FROM YOU, THAT'S A COMPLIMENT.

BESIDES, LIKE THE BABE SAID, WE WON.

LOOK, UH, I'M SORRY IF WE INTERRUPTED...

...NO, NO. WE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN REAL TROUBLE IF NOT FOR YOU AND, UM...

YOU KNOW, I NEVER THOUGHT MY DUPLICATE WOULD BE...

JEN.

I AM HJ'NA.

I GUESS WE SHOULD BE GOING.

I GUESS. TELL ME, IS THAT YOUR STABLE-MATE?

ACE? HE'S... WELL, I DON'T KNOW. NOT YET, I GUESS.

I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU HE'S REAL CUTE.

FOR A HUMAN.

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

GIRL TALK. ARE WE READY?

SIGH

AS READY AS WE'LL EVER BE, I GUESS.

REMEMBER, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE..!

...HOOOME!

HOME?

YES THIS IS MY TOWN BUT...

WHERE ARE THE PEOPLE?

WHY IS EVERYTHING BOARDED UP?

UH, JEN?

OUR LEADER

THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.

NEXT: THE REBELLION

Xibram

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: AFTER MUCH HUSTLE AND BUSTLE (AND A BATTLE OR THREE,) JEN AND I MADE OUR WAY BACK TO JEN'S HOME WORLD, ONLY TO FIND THAT OUR OLD FOE **TARANT** (WHOM WE HAD MAROONED HERE A WHILE BACK) HAD **TAKEN OVER.** NOW HE RULED FROM HIS SKULL-BEDECKED THRONE, PLOTTING HIS **NEXT** STRIKE AGAINST HIS SUBJECTS.

HELLO, TARANT.

ACE BLOOD-RUNNER, I BELIEVE. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET BACK. HOW LONG IN YOUR TIME?

FIVE YEARS, LOCAL. I TAKE IT YOU'RE HERE TO KILL ME? TO SLAY THE OPPRESSING TARANT?

I'M HERE TO CORRECT AN IMBALANCE. TO SET THINGS RIGHT. YOU DON'T BELONG HERE.

AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO CORRECT THAT, BLOODRUNNER? YOU FOUND YOUR MAGIC BOOK AT LAST?

BY GIVING YOU **THIS.** THE KEY BACK TO THE MAZEWORKS.

CHK-KA-CHK

THERE IS NOTHING FOR YOU HERE.

TAKE IT AND GO HOME.

GO HOME?

BWAH-HAH-HAH!!

HOME?

FOOLISH CHAOS-CHILD!

IT HAS BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE I CONQUERED THIS LAND!

IF I WOULD RETURN NOW, MY LAW-BROTHERS WOULD FIND ME IMPURE AND SENTENCE ME TO DEATH.

INSTEAD, I SHOULD SLAY YOU, AND KEEP MY SECRET KINGDOM AWAY FROM THE MAZEWORKS!

I TOLD YOU IT WOULDN'T WORK.

EXCUSE ME FOR TRYING TO RESOLVE THIS WITHOUT FURTHER BLOODSHED.

YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER THE OFFER, MONSTER.

YOU DON'T BELONG HERE.

THE GIRL? YOU'RE THAT FRAGILE FLOWER WITH MORE **COURAGE** THAN **BRAINS**. I THOUGHT ABOUT YOU OFTEN, WHEN I STILL DREAMED OF REVENGE.

COME. TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT, GIRL-CHILD.

I PROMISE TO KILL YOU SWIFTLY.

JEN!

IN YOUR DREAMS, MONSTER!

NEXT: FINALE

Xibaan

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

ART
BOB LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: WE HAD GOTTEN HOME (WELL, TO JEN'S HOME) AND THOUGHT WE COULD GET RID OF TARANT JUST BY OFFERING HIM A WAY BACK TO THE MAZEWORKS. UNFORTUNATELY, FIVE YEARS HAD PASSED FOR TARANT IN THE TIME WE HAD BEEN GONE, AND HE WAS IN NO MOOD TO LEAVE, OR EVEN DISCUSS THINGS RATIONALLY. SO WE HAD TO FALL BACK ON MINDLESS VIOLENCE. AND HE WAS **BETTER** AT THAT THAN WE WERE.

JEN!

CONCERN, BLOODRUNNER? DO NOT FEAR, I WILL **KILL** YOU AS SOON AS I **DISPOSE** OF YOUR LITTLE WENCH FRIEND HERE.

TARANT...

SHUT...

...UP!

HIS HEAD...

DON'T LET IT GET...

AWAY!

CHUNK!

IS THAT IT? GUESS SO. WITH TARANT GONE EVERYTHING SHOULD GET BACK TO NORMAL, HERE.

LOOK, I... I GUESS I'LL BE... GOING, THEN.

YOU'RE NOT STAYING?

I MEAN, JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

I CAN'T. WELL, SHOULDN'T

I HAVE MY OWN GOAL. MY OWN QUEST. I HAVE TO FIND THE MISSING BOOK, LIBRAM X.

I HAVE TO GO BACK INTO THE MAZEWORKS.

YOU HAVE A SAFE PLACE, **HERE** IN YOUR HOME WORLD.

THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG.

YOU COULD AT LEAST ASK IF I WANTED TO COME BACK WITH YOU.

AFTER WE WENT THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE TO GET BACK HERE?

YOU'D JUST SAY NO.

OR WORSE YET, "LET'S THINK ABOUT IT."

I GUESS... YOU'RE RIGHT.

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT THEN.
WE BOTH HAVE OUR OWN LIVES.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW...
I...I'LL THINK OF YOU OFTEN.
ACE...
IT WAS FUN, MY FRIEND, GOOD-BYE!
ACE BLOODRUNNER, YOU BLOODY FOOL!
DON'T YOU KNOW YOU NEED SOMEONE TO KEEP YOU OUT OF TROUB...
PLINK!
"AND THAT IS HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER."

Ilibram X

CREATED BY JEFF GRUBB

ART BY B. LESSL

THE LAST THING I REMEMBER I WAS FOLLOWING ACE INTO THIS PORTAL.

TRAVELING FROM ONE DIMENSION INTO ANOTHER SEEMS TO BE ELEVATING THE MEMORY CENTERS IN MY MIND.

I REMEMBER WHEN TARANT AND ACE FIRST FELL INTO MY HOMEWORLD.

ACE CALLED IT OUR FIRST DATE.

BUT TARANT BECAME VERY UNPLEASANT!

DO NOT INTERRUPT ME IN THE DUE PROCESS OF LAW!

URK!

NOOO!

I ENDED UP BEING THROWN INTO THE MAZEWORKS!

RIGHT AWAY WE HAD PROBLEMS WITH MYTES

SOON AFTER WITH ORBS!

ACE?

ACE?!?

THE MAZEWORKS PROVE TO BE AN EXCITING BUT DANGEROUS WORLD!

POOOOOR!

I LEARN TO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.

AFTER ESCAPING FROM THE HELLBANE ARTILLERY, WE MET CHARLIE, THE CYBER-GHOUL, WHO SAW TO IT THAT I WAS OUTFITTED IN WARRIOR GARB.

THEN MORE BATTLES TRYING TO FIND A DOOR BACK HOME.

OUR LEADER

WE FINALLY GET BACK TO MY WORLD, BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS. TARANT SET HIMSELF UP AS KING, WHILE WE WERE GONE.

I ENDED UP HAVING TO FALL BACK ON MINDLESS VIOLENCE TO DISPOSE OF HIM!

ACE MUST RETURN TO THE MAZEWORKS. BUT IS AFRAID TO ASK ME TO JOIN HIM, KNOWING THE DANGERS WE MAY FACE.

I DECIDE TO JOIN HIM ANYWAY

I FOLLOWED HIM BACK. AFTER TARANT, MYTES, ORBS... I STILL WENT, TO HELP ACE BLOODRUNNER IN HIS SEARCH FOR THE MYTHICAL LIBRAM X. WELL... SOMEONE HAS TO WATCH OUT FOR THE GUY.

NEXT ISSUE

LIBRAM X. THE RETURN.

Libram X

STORY
DAVE GROSS

ART
BOB LESSL

CREATED BY JEFF GROBB AND BOB LESSL

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN WELL CONNECTED. WELL, AT LEAST SINCE I DIED.

03:00

PERSONAL JOURNAL

<DEADHEAD> NEW LEADS ?
<HACKER> WHEN WE CRACKED 'EM THERE IT WAS.
<ICY> WHAT DID YOUR BLOOD-RUNNER DIG UP ?
<DEADHEAD> B R B (CHECKING NOTES)

BRRRP!

PERSONAL JOURNAL

BEFORE THAT, I WAS STILL A NET ZOMBIE, ONLY NOT THE DEAD KIND.

03:05

BLOODRUNNERS		127K
DOOM		302K
GIF8		755K
JOURNAL 27		12,944K
LAWBOYS		214K
LIBRAM	X	894K
SUPR		42K

I KNOW THAT BECAUSE I KEEP A JOURNAL WHICH I REREAD A LOT. OTHERWISE I'D NEVER KNOW.

PERSONAL JOURNAL

GAAAAH!

YOU SEE, WHEN IT HAPPENED - DEATH, THAT IS - SOMETHING ABOUT MY BEING PLUGGED IN AT THE TIME KEPT MY BRAIN ALIVE.

THE BODY'S A DIFFERENT MATTER, BUT IT'S HELD UP PRETTY WELL, CONSIDERING.

TO DO TODAY
WARN ACE ABOUT

DAMMIT!

BUT MY **BRAIN**, IT GOT TURNED AROUND **BACKWARD**. I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT I JUST TYPED.

BUT I KNOW WHAT I'M **ABOUT** TO TYPE.

I REMEMBER.

IT'S A PRETTY USEFUL TALENT, AND I TRY TO SHARE IT WITH THE **RIGHT** PEOPLE.

SOME OF THEM **THINK** IT'S A GIFT, LIVING BACKWARD, NO MEMORIES, NO RECRIMINATIONS, NO WORRIES.

RIGHT?

WRONG. I'VE GOT MEMORIES, REGRETS. THEY'RE JUST ALL FROM THE **FUTURE**.

03:10

IT'S EVEN **WORSE**, **KNOWING** WHAT MISTAKES I'M GOING TO MAKE.

FROM WHAT I READ IN MY JOURNAL, I CAN NEVER SEEM TO AVOID THEM, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY.

THE ONE THING I CAN'T REMEMBER ABOUT THE FUTURE IS HOW I DIE.

TO DO TODAY

WARN ACE ABOUT KILLER

PRINT BLOODRUNNER FILE

OH, I KNOW I'M GOING TO DIE AGAIN, THIS TIME FOR GOOD.

BLOODY TYPOS!

I EVEN KNOW **WHEN.**

IT'S IN ABOUT **TWO** MINUTES.

3:14

WHAT? AM I EARLY?

SURPRISED?

NO... IT CAN'T BE...

THE REST IS KIND OF FUZZY. I FIGURE THAT'S SO I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO **AVOID** IT.

SORRY, CHARLIE.

NO... NO... NO...

DON'T LISTEN TO WHAT ANYONE ELSE SAYS ABOUT LIVING BACK-WARD. TAKE IT FROM ME...

...THERE'S NO **FUTURE** IN IT.

Libram X

ART
BOB LESSL

STORY
DAVE GROSS

there's this guy

BEFORE HE CAME INTO MY LIFE, EVERYTHING WAS DULL AND ORDINARY.

BUT NOW THINGS ARE EVERYTHING BUT DULL AND ORDINARY IN THE MAZEWORKS!

WE DO PLENTY OF TRAVELING...

...MEET LOTS OF INTERESTING PEOPLE...

...AND-BEST OF ALL-WE DO EVERYTHING TOGETHER!

AT LEAST WE USED TO. HE MUST KNOW HOW I FEEL, BUT SOMETIMES I CAN'T BE SURE.

SOMETIMES I THINK HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ME **HALF AS MUCH** AS HE DOES ABOUT THE BOOK.

IT'S CALLED LIBRAM X BECAUSE NOBODY KNOWS MUCH ABOUT IT, EXCEPT THAT IT'S SUPPOSED TO CONTROL THE MAZEWORKS.

HE'S PROBABLY READING ABOUT THAT BOOK RIGHT NOW, WHILE I SIT HERE WRITING ABOUT HIM.

SOONER OR LATER, WE NEED TO STOP WRITING AND START TALKING ABOUT US.

HEY, TOOTS. LOOKING FOR ACE?

YES, HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?

NO. I GUESS HE'S WITH CHARLIE.

HE SAID THEY'D BE WORKING ON THE NET LAST NIGHT.

<SIGH> HE'S PROBABLY STILL THERE. CHARLIE MAY NOT NEED SLEEP, BUT.. <SIGH>

I GUESS YOU KIDS'RE GONNA WANT TO TALK ALONE, EH?

NO. I MEAN YES. YES.

ACE? CHARLIE?

Libram X

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
SHADOWS AND LIGHT

STORY DAVE GROSS
ART BOB LESSL

ACE! CHARLIE! WHAT HAPPENED!

HE'S DEAD. REALLY DEAD. MURDERED!

WHO WAS IT? DID YOU SEE? OH, CHARLIE...

WHOEVER IT WAS MUST HAVE HEARD ME COMING AND GOT AWAY.

BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE WITH CHARLIE.

I... WAS SUPPOSED TO BE, BUT I WAS LATE. ONLY THIS MYTE WAS LEFT AND IT SLOWED ME DOWN ENOUGH THAT THE OTHERS GOT AWAY.

IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE FOR CHARLIE.

WHO WOULD WANT TO KILL CHARLIE? I DIDN'T THINK HE HAD ENEMIES, ONLY FRIENDS.

SOMEONE TRYING TO GET AT ME... OR TO STOP ME FROM GETTING AT THE LIBRAM. THE LAW-BOYS.

ACE, I'M SORRY ABOUT CHARLIE. I KNOW YOU WANT US TO FIND WHO KILLED HIM AND

THE BEST WAY TO PAY THEM BACK - WHOEVER DID THIS - IS FOR ME TO FIND LIBRAM X. AND MAKE SURE THEY NEVER HAVE IT.

YOU MEAN "WE" RIGHT? WE'LL FIND THE LIBRAM TOGETHER.

YOU KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THIS IS. IT'S NOT ALL ADVENTURE AND EXCITEMENT. HOW CAN I ASK YOU TO...?

HOW CAN YOU? HOW CAN'T YOU? HAVEN'T I HELPED? HAVEN'T I BEEN IMPORTANT?

OF COURSE YOU'RE IMPORTANT, BUT...

BUT NOT AS IMPORTANT AS LIBRAM X. IS THAT IT? ACE, I THOUGHT WE HAD SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT BOOK.

THAT'S JUST IT. LOOK AT CHARLIE. I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING HURT.

THEN LET ME GO WITH YOU, AND WE CAN LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER.

BUT...

I DIDN'T COME HERE JUST TO WAIT AT HOME WHILE YOU RUN OFF ON YOUR QUEST!

BUT...

AND YOU NEED MY HELP BECAUSE YOU KEEP GETTING OBSESSED WITH THAT BOOK!

BUT...

I MEAN, IF YOU'D BEEN HERE WITH CHARLIE, INSTEAD OF LOCKING YOURSELF UP WITH THAT MAP...

I DIDN'T MEAN THAT! OH, ACE, I'M SORRY. THIS WASN'T YOUR FAULT.

BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU'RE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN ANYTHING.

I'M SORRY IT'S TAKEN THIS TO SHAKE ME OUT OF IT.

CLIK

WHATEVER HAPPENS WE'LL SEE IT THROUGH TOGETHER.

MEANWHILE...

THUMP! CRACK!!!

OW! WHEN I GET MY HANDS... OW!

HEE HEE HEE!

HEE!

UHNF! YOU LITTLE CREEPS!

BUMP BUMP BUMP

WHAM!

RUSTLE RUSTLE

SIGH.

Inbram X

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ACE IN THE HOLE

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

WEEKS AFTER CHARLIES MURDER

AT LAST!

EEP!

KRAK!

SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED CHARLIE!

OH... YEAH. I MEAN, YEAH, I'M THE ONE! WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT IT?

HOW'S THAT?

PERFECT, BEAKER. JUST PERFECT.

HEH. WHEW! WHEN YOU FIRST CAME THROUGH THAT DOOR, I THOUGHT YOU WERE GONNA...

SORRY, BEAKER

URP!

KKK... KK... KRAK

ARE YOU TWO ALL RIGHT?

THIS BUNCH WAS NO MATCH FOR US.

YEAH, WE REALLY TOOK 'EM BY SURPRISE.

OUR INFORMATION WAS RIGHT. THE ONE WHO KILLED CHARLIE WAS INSIDE THE HIDEOUT.

SO NOW YOU TWO CAN GET BACK TO SEARCHING FOR THE LIBRAM WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT THIS BRUTE SQUAD.

ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING ABOUT SPENDING MORE TIME WITH JEN, SHOWING HER MORE OF THE MAZEWORKS.

BUT WHAT ABOUT...

ANOTHER DAY. WE DESERVE A VACATION FROM ALL THIS WAR.

MEANWHILE, DEEP WITHIN THE MAZEWORKS.

HEY, I'M SICK IN HERE! SOMEBODY COME IN AND HELP!

NO WAY! HE'S NOT SICK, AND WHO CARES IF HE WAS?

O.H. HEH HEH.

WONDER WHAT'S KEEPING BEAKER.

YEAH, HE LOVES THIS GAME.

HELP! HELP! FIRE! FIRE!

FIRE!? FIRE!? WE BETTER LET HIM OUT!

THERE'S NO FIRE, STUPID! HE'S TRICKING YOU.

HEH. I KNEW THAT.

HE'S JUST LIKE THE BOSS. TRICKY. THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE TO STAND WATCH.

HEH. RIGHT.

DAMN.

Urban Xam

STORY
DAVE GROSS

ART
BOB LESSL

AT LAST! CHARLIE'S TERMINAL TURNED UP THE CLUE WE NEED. MEET ME TONIGHT - I'LL BE WORKING THERE LATE. COME ALONE - WE'VE GOT TO KEEP THIS SECRET A LITTLE LONGER.

ACE? YOU HERE?

MIGHT AS WELL LOOK AROUND. MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING HERE.

SOMETHING TO EXPLAIN WHY ACE'S BEEN ACTING SO WEIRD...

OH, HELL...

HEE HEE HEE! YOUR TURN! YOUR TURN!

OH, MAN, IS THIS GONNA...

EVERYONE'S GOT A DOUBLE HERE. COMMON KNOWLEDGE.

SOME HAVE TRIPLES OR MORE. DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH OF AN IMPRESSION YOU'VE MADE HERE IN THE MAZEWORKS. HOW IMPORTANT YOU'VE BECOME.

OF COURSE, MOST DOUBLES AREN'T EXACT TWINS. JEN TOLD ME ABOUT MEETING HERS. A SORT OF CENTAUR-JEN. WEIRD.

SO IT'S BOTH EASIER AND HARDER FOR ME. I CAN PASS FOR ACE. I'VE EVEN FOOLED HIS CLOSE FRIENDS

ACE! YOU'VE BEEN GONE A WHILE.

GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS.

HI! SORRY I CAN'T TALK, GOTTA GO.

THAT ACE. ALWAYS ON THE RUN.

IT'S TRICKY, SOMETIMES. ACE'S FRIENDS EXPECT ME TO KNOW WHAT ACE KNOWS.

LUCKILY, WE'RE A LOT ALIKE. WE ACT ALIKE. WE LIKE THE SAME THINGS.

NO ONE SUSPECTS A THING. EXCEPT MAYBE OTTO. BUT I'VE DEALT WITH HIM.

ACE?

THE FIRST DAY WAS THE WORST. AND NO ONE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT JEN, AND I...

ENOUGH. WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR STORIES. WHAT OF THE LIBRAM?

WELL, I WAS TRYING TO EXPLAIN...

THE LIBRAM, BLOODRUNNER.

>SIGH< ACE HAD A MAP IN HIS ROOMS.

GIVE US THE MAP.

I DON'T HAVE IT ON ME. BESIDES, IT'S NO GOOD WITHOUT THE KEY. CHARLIE'S THE ONE WHO HAD THAT INFORMA...

BRING US THE MAP AND THE KEY.

BUT...

WE SHALL TOLERATE NO FURTHER DELAYS. YOU HAVE ONE MORE DAY BEFORE WE PASS JUDGMENT ON YOUR CONTRACT.

WHAT!?

WE WEARY OF EXCUSES. YOU BECOME TOO MUCH LIKE ACE. YOU BECOME UNRELIABLE. A LIABILITY.

ONE THING MORE...

BRING US THE WOMAN CALLED JEN.

YOU DON'T NEED HER!

SHE WAS CLOSE TO ACE AND MAY KNOW SOMETHING OF THE LIBRAM.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING I CAN'T LEARN FOR YOU.

SHE IS ALSO SAID TO HAVE HAD A HAND IN TARANT'S DEATH. THE LAW REQUIRES SHE BE PUNISHED

BRING THEM TO US BLOODRUNNER-THE MAP, THE KEY, AND THE WOMAN. OR WE SHALL SEND SOMEONE FOR YOU.

THE STORY THUS FAR: AFTER TRACKING DOWN THE LAWBOY AGENTS WHO KILLED CHARLIE, JEN AND THE MAN SHE BELIEVES TO BE ACE BLOODRUNNER, TOOK A BREAK FROM THEIR SEARCH FOR LIBRAM X. OTTO, SUSPICIOUS OF THIS "ACE," FELL INTO A TRAP.

Libram X

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

OTTO!

GROAN

ACE? IS IT REALLY YOU?

CLANK

OF COURSE IT'S REALLY ME.. WHO ELSE?

OH, NO!

TELL ME EVERYTHING FROM THE BEGINNING..

RIGHT AFTER WE FOUND YOU WITH CHARLIE'S BODY...

CHARLIE'S DEAD?

OK, I'LL START FROM THE OTHER BEGINNING...

WHY DO WE KEEP THEM ALIVE?

WE MAY HAVE NEED OF THEM. HE DOESN'T TRUST THE OTHER BLOODRUNNER.

AND ACE IS THE ONLY OTHER ONE WHO...

LOOKS LIKE THE BOSS HAS TROUBLE WITH HIS BOSS.

MEANWHILE

...RUNNING OFF TO SEARCH FOR IT WHILE I'M SLEEPING. AND I THOUGHT...

GOOD! YOU'RE ALREADY PACKING. BUT HURRY! THEY'RE AFTER US!

WHO? MYTES?

NO, IT'S WORSE. THEY WERE WAITING FOR ME AT CHARLIE'S.

AT CHARLIE'S? WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE ME ALONG?

I... I WISH I HAD, NOW. I DIDN'T EXPECT ANY TROUBLE. I JUST REMEMBERED CHARLIE'S BACKUPS.

WELL... ALL RIGHT. BUT BACKUPS?

COPIES OF HIS LAST RESEARCH ON LIBRAM X— INCLUDING CLUES THAT MAKE MY MAP USEFUL!

I'M SAYING I KNOW WHERE TO FIND LIBRAM X.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

THERE! FOUND!

IT'S SOMEWHERE NEAR THIS LEVEL.

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

BLOODRUNNER, THE GIRL COMES WITH ME. THE MAP TOO.

KRAK

JEN. NO!

RIGHT!

I'LL GIVE YOU THE MAP! JUST LET HER GO!

AAGH

THAT WAS NOT THE DEAL, BLOODRUNNER. YOU WERE PAID TO...

SHE WAS NEVER A PART OF THE DEAL

WHAT THE?

JEN! I THOUGHT...

WE'D BETTER HURRY.

Libram X

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: WHILE JEN AND THE MAN SHE BELIEVES TO BE ACE, RACE TO FIND LIBRAM X, THE REAL ACE AND OTTO LANGUISH IN A LAWBOY DUNGEON...

HERE THEY COME, RIGHT ON TIME FOR SUPPER.

UPH!

WHA- MRUH!

GOOD JOB, OTTO. NOW WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT IMPOSTER AND...

INDEED. BUT FIRST YOU DEAL WITH US.

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US?

WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS WANTED. THE LIBRAM. WE NO LONGER TRUST OUR OWN AGENT.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'LL HELP YOU?

BECAUSE, BLOODRUNNER, YOUR DOUBLE, NOT ONLY KNOWS WHERE TO FIND THE LIBRAM...

HE ALSO HAS YOUR PRECIOUS JEN!

MEANWHILE...

THE MAP SHOWS ONLY TWO STAIRWAYS...

SO, WHAT DID THAT LAWBOY BRUTE MEAN BY A "DEAL," BACK THERE?

AH, THEY ALMOST HAD ME AT CHARLIES. I HAD TO **TALK** MY WAY OUT OF IT...

AND?

...AND SO I TOLD THEM WHAT THEY WANTED TO HEAR. THAT'S **ALL**.

HMMM THEN HOW DID THEY FIND US SO QUICKLY?

JEN! YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I'D LET THEM FIND US

NO! I MEAN, LATELY IT'S JUST THAT...

<SIGH> ALL RIGHT. BUT WE'RE NOT FINISHED WITH THIS, ACE BLOODRUNNER.

LOOK, WE'RE REALLY CLOSE. AND IF ONE OF THOSE BRUTES FOUND US, OTHERS CAN'T BE FAR AWAY.

THIS SHOULD BE IT!

YOU MEAN IT'S JUST HERE? ANYONE COULD JUST WALK UP TO IT?

I GUESS THAT'S THE IDEA, TO HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT

ACE! LOOK OUT!

BLOODRUNNER!

RUN, JEN! GET THE LIBRAM!

BUT...

GO! USE THE LIBRAM TO STOP THEM.

HURRY!

Libram X

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

WHILE THE LAWBOYS GUARD THE DOOR TO CHARLIE'S ROOM...

GOT IT, OTTO?

ALMOST. CHARLIE NEVER SHOWED ME... ...THERE!

WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

ANYTHING ABOUT MY MAP OR THE LIBRAM. CHARLIE HAD SOMETHING FOR ME THE NIGHT HE...

THE NIGHT HE WAS MURDERED.

YEAH.

TAPT TAP TIP

WHAT'S THAT?

LET'S SEE.

BREEEP

HELLO, ACE. HI, OTTO.

CHARLIE!?

WHAT!

HAVE YOU FOUND SOMETHING?

NO NOTHING YET.

BUT WE SAW YOUR BODY!

A PART OF ME, AT LEAST.

SURE YOU DID. I DON'T NEED IT, HERE.

SO, YOUR MIND IS IN THE COMPUTER?

YOU GOT IT, ACE. WHEN THE OTHER YOU STRANGLED ME, I WAS STILL CONNECTED,

I JUST STAYED THAT WAY

WOW!

MAYBE IT HAPPENED BECAUSE ID ALREADY BEEN DEAD AND WAS LIVING BACKWARDS.

I'M GLAD YOU'RE NOT REALLY DEAD, BUT WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE LIBRAM AND JEN

MY HACKER BUDDIES SENT ME FILES SHOWING WHERE THE LAST KEEPER OF THE LIBRAM HID IT. BUT THE OTHER ACE TOOK THEM.

DAMN!

DON'T WORRY! I MADE COPIES. I ALWAYS MAKE COPIES.

GREAT! SO WHERE'S THE LIBRAM?

WHERE ELSE?

IT'S IN THE LIBRARY.

SOON...

WAIT, BLOOD-RUNNER! IF THE LIBRAM IS GUARDED AS YOU SAY, WE NEED REINFORCEMENTS.

NO TIME! WE NEED TO SURPRISE THEM.

READY?

READY!

GO!

STOP, BLOODRUNNER! WE HAD AN AGREEMENT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY BOUGHT IT!

THEY NEVER LEARN. BUT HURRY-WE CAN'T LET THEM CATCH US.

WHAT'LL WE DO WHEN WE GET THERE? WHAT IF JEN THINKS YOUR DOUBLE IS REALLY YOU?

SHE'LL KNOW ME. SHE MUST!

LOOKS LIKE YOUR DOUBLE IS DEFENDING THE DOOR!

SO, NOW WHO DO WE FIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW...

...BUT LET'S GET STARTED!

OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY, ACE AND DEUCE FIGHT WITH THE LAWBOKS, WHILE INSIDE, JEN SEARCHES FOR THE SECRET OF

Libram X

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

I ALREADY SUSPECTED THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ACE.

BUT I WAS STILL SHOCKED TO SEE THE TWO OF THEM TOGETHER.

I DIDN'T EXPECT EVERYTHING TO END SO QUICKLY. THERE WAS NO TIME TO THINK.

STOP HER!

JEN! GET THE LIBRAM! USE IT TO SAVE US!

WHAT!?

CRACK

STILL, I HAD TO DO SOMETHING FAST. I HAD NO IDEA WHERE TO FIND THE LIBRAM.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY ONE OF THOSE BOOKS.

OR IT COULD HAVE BEEN ALL OF THEM.

ALL I DID WAS THINK OF THE LIBRARY AS A SINGLE, HUGE BOOK AND THERE I WAS, ALONE WITH THE LIBRAM.

INSIDE WERE THE STORIES OF THE MAZE-WORKS. ALL OF THEM.

THERE WAS MY STORY AND ACE'S STORY AND THERE WAS HIS STORY.

I SAW HIM KILLING CHARLIE, TRICKING ACE, AND FOOLING ME. I SAW HOW HE USED ME.

BUT I SAW HOW HE LOVED ME, TOO.

I SAW ALL OF THE STORIES THAT WEREN'T WRITTEN YET. MILLIONS OF FUTURES.

I SAW WHERE THE STORIES STOPPED THEN I SAW THE PEN.

AND WHERE DID THE WRITER GO? DID MY ARRIVAL MAKE HIM LEAVE?

THE PEN MADE ME WONDER. WHO WROTE ALL THESE STORIES?

OR DID IT LET HIM ESCAPE?

WAS HE BACK IN THE MAZEWORKS

EVEN NOW?

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I WROTE IN THE LIBRAM? COULD I WRITE ANYTHING I WISHED? WOULD WHAT I WROTE BECOME TRUE?

AND COULD I BE A PART OF THE STORY, IF I CHOSE TO WRITE IT?

Coming in February:
"The End"

AT LAST JEN HAS DISCOVERED THE SECRET OF

Libram X

STORY DAVE GROSS

ART BOB LESSL

I WAS AFRAID TO WRITE ANYTHING IN THE LIBRAM, BUT I HAD TO TRY. I THOUGHT I'D WRITE, "JEN SUDDENLY REALIZES WHAT TO DO."

THAT SHOULD DO IT.

THE PEN WOULDN'T TOUCH THE PAPER. I COULDN'T WRITE MY OWN NAME ON THE PAGE... THAT TRICK WOULDN'T WORK.

IT WAS AS IF THE PEN KNEW I WASN'T A PART OF THE MAZEWORKS ANYMORE.

WHAT IF THE MAGIC WEREN'T IN THE LIBRAM AFTER ALL?

MAYBE **THIS** WAS MY WAY OUT.

THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO RETURN TO THE MAZEWORKS.

BUT ALSO I HAD TO MAKE SURE THE LAWBOYS COULD NEVER USE THE LIBRAM.

I'D SEEN ENOUGH OF THEM TO KNOW WHAT THEY WOULD MAKE OF THE MAZEWORKS.

WE CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!

JEN'S GOT TO FIND THE LIBRAM.

SHE CAN DO IT!

BUT IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF THEY KNEW EVERYTHING...

...IF THEY COULDN'T CHANGE IT!

THIS IS WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR!

GET IT! NOW!

JEN! USE THE LIBRAM!

RUN, JEN! SAVE YOURSELF!

HERE!

NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YES! LETS GO!

HELP ME WITH THIS.

HOW COULD YOU?

LET'S GO!

THAT WON'T SLOW THEM FOR LONG.

WON'T THEY JUST USE THE LIBRAM AGAINST US NOW?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

MAKING SURE.

EVEN MONTHS LATER, I THINK ABOUT THE LIBRAM EVERY DAY.

ARE YOU SURE WE CAN'T..?

DID IT JUST RECORD OUR STORIES? OR DID IT SOMEHOW DETERMINE THEM?

I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE LAWBOYS CAN ONLY READ ABOUT THE PAST NOW THAT THE QUILL IS GONE. THEY CAN'T CHANGE **ANYTHING**.

KNOCK KNOCK

THINGS DIDN'T GET ANY SIMPLER AFTER THE LIBRAM. IN SOME WAYS THEY'RE A LOT WORSE!

JUST A MINUTE!

HI THERE.

YOU'RE EARLY.

BUT AT LEAST WE'RE ALL FREE...

SORRY. HOPE I DIDN'T INTERRUPT ANYTHING... IMPORTANT.

OH, NO. JUST A LITTLE WRITING.

TO MAKE OUR OWN STORIES.